

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

UNPLANNED GROWTH, THIS PROBLEM MUST BE ADDRESSED

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, on the front page of newspapers across America today there is another sad episode, this time in Alabama, of reckless behavior on the road, talking about road rage where a woman killed another after a traffic confrontation.

The story in this morning's Post is replete with examples of how their lives were stressed as a result of unplanned growth, congestion, traffic and sprawl in their community. Last week, I discussed at some length on the floor of this Chamber the very real health implications of unplanned growth across America.

Before Congress adjourns, I think it is important for us to reflect on the fact that how we plan and build our community makes a huge difference, and I think it important for us to reflect on it here in the Washington, D.C. capital area.

While I personally welcome the attention that has been received by the District of Columbia in activities recently for the District, it is not enough for us to focus on livability just as it relates to Washington, D.C. We need to be thinking broadly about the health and livability of the entire 17-government region in metropolitan Washington, D.C. We cannot separate the health of our region from larger issues.

Citizens throughout this region, as I meet with them, are asking themselves the right questions. Is it not possible for people in our Nation's capital to think more comprehensively about land use and transportation and put those pieces together in a thoughtful way? Is it possible to avoid the obvious disconnect between massive infrastructure investments and access, like we have seen the marvelous front page stories and pictures where the Redskins stadium has inspired massive gridlock, traffic congestion and frustration? People are asking whether or not the Federal Government cannot be leading by example here in metropolitan areas, using the resources and presence of the Federal Government to make a difference?

People are asking, is it not possible in the metropolitan capital region for us to take a tiny percentage of the rev-

enues that are generated from new development and growth to help solve regional problems on a regional basis?

Why do we not, in this region, recognize that unbalanced growth, when high activity on the western end and the decline in the eastern portion of the region has huge negative implications for both areas?

There is a marvelous document that has been prepared by the Brookings Institution Center for Urban and Metropolitan Policy called *A Region Divided*, a Study of Growth in Greater Washington, D.C. It documents the great strengths that we have in the capital region, the wealth, the booming economy, the affordable housing, the brain power, and the unifying forces that we have with the Federal Government, the media, the historical context, but we are currently a region divided, as documented by this report.

I hope that as we in Congress begin a new year, that every Member in the House and Senate, as they review their agenda to make America better, will review this report and reflect on ways that we can help make our capital region one of America's most livable communities where our families are safe, healthy and economically secure.

THE TIME HAS PASSED FOR JUST TALKING AND RHETORIC. LET US DO SOMETHING ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Social Security. We have heard a lot of talk about it.

The President 2 years ago in his State of the Union message said, let us start putting Social Security first. Republicans have said that and Democrats have said that. So we are doing a lot of talking but we are not doing a great deal of putting Social Security first.

We have taken maybe a giant step in the conviction of the Republicans not to spend the Social Security surplus, and so we have made a decision that despite the fact that there are more revenues coming into the Federal Government than we have seen for a long, long time, and the revenues coming in are both what is called on budget, which means the income tax and all other revenues except for the Social Security tax, and Social Security tax is now 12.4 percent of most of what everybody makes, what is happening is it is a pay-as-you-go program. Social Security gets their Social Security, the FICA tax, the payroll tax, money in every week and almost immediately it is sent out in benefits.

Since we dramatically increased the Social Security tax in 1983, there is a little more Social Security tax coming

in than there is required to pay current benefits. That is what is called the Social Security surplus, and what Republicans decided several months ago is that we were going to hold the line on the budget not to spend the Social Security surplus for other government programs and instead use that money to pay down what I call the Wall Street debt or the debt held by the public.

I have introduced a Social Security bill every year since I have been in Congress, every session since I have been in Congress since 1993. I just introduced the most recent improved Social Security bill last month, and it was based on our task force report, our bipartisan task force report, where Republicans and Democrats came together to agree on the findings. The bill I introduced reflects these findings.

Let me briefly go over this chart. Number one, it allows workers to invest a portion of their Social Security tax. It starts at 2.5 percent of your taxable payroll. That is now \$76,000. Over the years, it increases. It can only be used for retirement but it is in the worker's name so that politicians in Washington cannot steal it like they have in the past.

In 1997, when Social Security money was short, we passed a law that says we are going to reduce benefits and increase taxes. Again in 1983, when Social Security revenues were short of the requirement for benefits, we increased taxes and cut benefits. Let us not do that again.

This bill does not increase taxes. Seventy-two percent of all the workers in the United States now pay more in the Social Security tax than they do in the income tax. Let us not increase taxes.

It repeals the Social Security earnings test so senior citizens, if they want to work, do not have their Social Security check reduced for the amount they work. That needs to be changed to allow seniors to work if they want to.

It gives workers the choice to retire as early as 59½ years old and start taking their personal retirement savings account out.

We also have a provision that encourages individuals, if they want to wait until they are 70, it substantially increases their benefits by 8 percentage points for every year that they delay taking their Social Security check. In other words, if they delay 3 years, it is a 24 percent increase in what they would otherwise get. One year would be 8 percent; 2 years 16 percent.

It gives each spouse equal shares of the personal retirement savings account and increases widow and widower benefits up to 110 percent.

As I met with widows and widowers, they said, look, you are dramatically taking so much of the Social Security check away when one of the spouses die that we cannot afford to live in our home anymore.

So we increased that up to 110 percent of the maximum benefit they were getting.

It reinforces the safety net for low income and disabled workers. It passes

the Social Security Administration's 75-year solvency test. In fact, the economists suggest that if we were able to put this bill into law, it would keep Social Security solvent forever. It is not going to reduce the existing benefits for current retirees or near-term retirees. It is something we need to look at if we are serious about saving Social Security.

The time has passed for just talking and rhetoric. Let us do something about it. Mr. Speaker, I hope that every American voting next year will be asking their candidates for the President and the Congress what their plan is to save Social Security and really put it first.

THE MESSAGE IS, WE WANT TO CHANGE HOW WASHINGTON WORKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing one of America's most diverse districts, representing the south side of Chicago, the south suburbs in Cook and Will Counties, bedroom communities like Morris and a lot of cornfields and farm towns, too. When one represents such a diverse district, they learn to listen. I find even though I represent city and suburbs and country, that there is a common message and that message is we want to change how Washington works. They want us to work together to find solutions and meet the challenges that we face.

Now, a question is often asked from a historical perspective: Has this Congress in the last 5 years of the Republican majority responded to that call to change how Washington works and, of course, look for solutions and enact solutions to the challenges that we face?

I am proud to say that in the last 5 years, we have. I was told when I was first elected to Congress there is no way we can balance the budget. They failed to do it for 28 years. There is no way we can cut taxes and balance the budget at the same time. They told us that the welfare system which had put more children in poverty than ever before had failed for a long time so nobody can fix that either, but I am proud to say that we did.

We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years and now we are debating what to do with the projected \$3 trillion surplus. We cut taxes for the middle class and, in my home State, that first middle class tax cut in 16 years now means that 3 million Illinois children qualify for the \$500 per child tax credit. That is \$1.5 billion a year that stays home in Illinois, helping Illinois families, rather than being spent here in Washington.

We enacted the first real welfare reform in over a generation, emphasizing

work and family and responsibility. As a result of that, Illinois' welfare rolls have been cut in half.

Those are successes, accomplishments that I am proud of and proud to be part of. That is pretty good. People often say the budget was balanced, taxes for the middle class were cut, welfare reform was enacted, but that is history. What is going to be done next?

Our agenda here in the Republican majority is a simple agenda. We want to strengthen our local schools. We want to pay down the national debt. We want to lower taxes for middle class families. We also want to strengthen our retirement security system of Medicare and Social Security. Our agenda responds to the concerns that I often hear. Whether in the union halls, the steel working union halls in the 10th Ward of Chicago or the VFW or Legions in Joliet or the grain elevators in Tonica or Ottawa, I am often asked several questions. One of the most basic questions I am asked time and time again is, when are the folks in Washington going to stop spending the Social Security surplus? When are the folks in Washington going to break that bad habit that has gone on for 30 years, where Washington has dipped into the Social Security trust fund, raided the Social Security trust fund to spend on other things?

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that our goal as Republicans is to stop the raid on Social Security.

I am proud to say that the White House has recognized this. At the beginning of the year, of course, the President called for spending 62 percent of the Social Security surplus on Social Security and then the other 38 percent on other priorities. Well, we said no; it is time to stop the raid on Social Security.

I was pleased to see this quote here from the chief of staff of the President when they finally recognized that Republicans were serious about stopping the raid on Social Security. Let me quote John Podesta, chief of staff to the President. The Republican's key goal is not to spend the Social Security surplus. Republicans want to stop the raid on Social Security.

I am pleased to say that just a few weeks ago that the Congressional Budget Office, nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, issued a letter saying that the budget that we have enacted, the budget that we have passed even though the President vetoed part of it, did not spend one dime of the Social Security trust fund.

The other question I am often asked by folks back home is no one ever talks about paying down the national debt. Washington spent beyond its means for 28 years, running up a \$3.4 trillion national debt. Is it not time to start paying that off?

I am proud to say that over the last 2 years we have made a down payment on paying down the national debt. We paid down \$150 billion of the public debt over the last 2 years; \$50 billion 2

years ago, \$100 billion this past year. This coming year we expect to pay down \$150 billion and over the next 10 years we should pay down two-thirds of the national debt, \$2.2 trillion. It is an important step as we work to pay down the debt which is so important if we consider our future for America's children.

The third question I am often asked is, and folks get frustrated, they are frustrated that our Nation's tax burden is so high, that only in time of war, in World War II, at the end of World War II, was the tax burden higher than it is today. Forty percent of the average Illinois' income goes to Washington and Springfield.

Unfortunately, the President vetoed our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. My hope is we will come back and do that.

Mr. Speaker, let us stop the raid on Social Security. Let us balance the budget. Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty. Let us help our schools and let us strengthen Social Security and Medicare.

THE CASE OF LINDA SHENWICK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, there are times when Congress must act to protect the interests of individuals, in particular Federal civil servants who have been unfairly harmed by the actions of the Federal Government.

Recently, Congress acted to protect Billy Dale and the other employees of the White House Travel Office who were unfairly removed from their jobs and who were illegally targeted for investigation and prosecution. This Congress acted to protect those workers and to pay for their legal expenses.

Another case has presented itself that behooves Congressional action also. The case I speak of is the case of Linda Shenwick. Linda Shenwick has been an exemplary public servant since she started working at the State Department in 1979. The Weekly Standard reported that Ms. Shenwick was driven by a sense of public service and an interest in foreign affairs.

In 1984, Ms. Shenwick was transferred to the U.S. mission to the United Nations where she first was assigned to handle personnel and budget issues. She quickly carved out a reputation for diligence and hard work, which won her three consecutive outstanding ratings, the highest given, between 1987 and July of 1989. Her performance also won her regular promotions and in 1988 she was admitted to the Senior Executive Service, an elite corps of Federal civil servants.

In August 1991 and again in November 1993, representatives of the other U.N. member states elected Shenwick to serve on the influential Advisory Committee on Administrative and